CHAPTER 6: TRANSPORTATION

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Introduction

The quality and quantity of a transportation system can define a community. ~~A transportation system~~It can draw residents together or create barriers to separate them. [A transportation element used in conjunction with other Growth Policy elements will shape Flathead County's community character, economic health, and quality of life.] Not only does transportation provide for mobility of people and goods, it also influences patterns of growth and development. A quality transportation system enables prompt emergency services (i.e.: sheriff, fire and medical, etc.) to protect the public's safety and welfare. Transportation planning requires developing strategies to manage the transportation system as a way to advance the county's long term goals and shape future growth. Ideally~~,~~ the transportation system, or at least individual components impacted by a development proposal, should be in place as subdivision and private development occurs.

Chapter 6 is intended to provide information on future transportation needs in the context of projected growth and development. A~~ny~~ transportation system must be flexible and capable of adapting to ~~a rapidly growing~~ a growing and changing population~~Flathead County~~. Transportation planning examines travel patterns and trends and creates policies that meet mobility needs without creating adverse impacts to the general character of the community or the environment. Transportation planning identifies appropriate modes of travel to support development decisions. Modes of travel in Flathead County include motor vehicle, pedestrian, bicycle, airplane, train and mass transit. Glacier Park International Airport is ~~also~~ specifically referenced due to its regional economic importance.

Goal

G.23 Maintain safe and efficient traffic flow and mobility on county roadways.

Policies

P.23.1 Manage land use and the transportation system as a unified and coordinated system to ensure that one does not outpace the other.

P.23.2 Limit private driveways from directly accessing arterials and collector roads to safe separation distances.

P.23.3 Encourage local (neighborhood) roads that access directly onto collector roads.

P.23.4 Recognize a~~A~~reas in proximity to employment and retail centers ~~should be recognized~~ as more suitable for higher residential densities and mixed use development.

P.23.5 ~~To p~~Protect public safety and allow safe travel by~~,~~ restricting development in areas without adequate road improvements.

P.23.6 Support land use patterns along transit corridors that reduce vehicle dependency and protect public safety.

P.23.7 Develop a transportation grid system that minimizes environmental impacts to developed and natural areas.

Comment [a1]: Why grid? Is this supported elsewhere in the document?

P.23.8 Promote coordinated and cooperative transportation planning with Kalispell, Columbia Falls, Whitefish and Montana Departments of Transportation and the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation.

P.23.9 ~~In county areas adjacent to cities, A~~adopt urban road standards and designs consistent with ~~the adjacent~~ city road standards in county areas adjacent to cities.~~.~~

P.23.10 Restrict direct access from private properties onto the Montana State highways and require frontage roads where needed and internal vehicle circulation roads for all development outside of urban areas.

P.23.11 Plan for and pursue opportunities for the development of additional east-west transportation corridors, especially between U.S. Highways 2, 93 and MT Highway 206.

P.23.12 Adopt urban transportation standards in areas developed to urban densities.

Goal

G.24 Develop a quality transportation network to meet the present and future needs of the public.

Policies

P.24.1 Ensure that identified functional class, road easement width, and condition of existing transportation facilities are adequate

P.24.2 Require County road improvements ~~needed~~ to mitigate impacts directly attributable to ~~the~~ a subdivision or development ~~should be required~~ as a necessary component of that development to preserve the carrying capacity of the roadway.

P.24.3 Require development projects to design local road systems that complement planned land uses and maintain mobility on arterial roads and highways.

P.24.4 Require ~~As subdivision developments are proposed, require~~ road easement dedications for identified areas of future connectivity as subdivision developments are proposed, to serve the present and future needs of the county residents.

P.24.5 Restrict signalized highway intersections to a minimum of one mile spacing outside of urban areas to promote mobility and ½ mile within urban settings such as Evergreen.

P.24.6 Attempt to develop cooperative agreements with the Montana Department of Transportation and the United States Federal Highway Administration to promote coordination of land use and transportation planning and the efficient use of transportation facilities.

P.24.7 Develop a comprehensive countywide transportation plan to categorize current needs and to identify future needs.

P.24.8 Develop uniform system of prioritization for road improvements and maintenance.

P.24.9 ~~As funding and resources allow, d~~Develop a Dust Abatement Program to mitigate dust impact from traffic on county roads as funding and resources allow.

Goal

G.25 Identify and support alternative modes of transportation.

Policies

P.25.1 Encourage development~~s~~ that provides functional alternative modes of travel such as bicycle and pedestrian paths.

P.25.2 Identify and prioritize areas for a predictable regional and interconnected bicycle path network and require pedestrian/bicycle easements on both sides of identified county roads. Encourage developments that aid and/or connect to this network.

P.25.3 Support the partnership between Eagle Transit, the State of Montana and the National Park Service to develop a joint transit system that services both Glacier National Park and the residents of Flathead County.

P.25.4 Support the expansion of the Glacier International Airport to keep pace with the emerging demand for aviation services.

P.25.5 Determine and prioritize areas for bike path easement acquisition and construction, prioritize use of funds, guide grant applications, identify roads that should have bicycle lanes, determine maintenance funding mechanisms, and set county-wide bicycle path/lane construction standards.

Comment [a2]: Develop PATHS plan?

PART 1: Roads in Flathead County (see Goals 23 and 24)

Flathead County Road and Bridge Department

The Flathead County Road and Bridge Department is responsible for operating and maintaining public county roads in unincorporated areas of the county. Department responsibilities include conducting traffic counts, snow plowing during winter months, and major construction projects during the non-winter months. Some other areas of responsibility include monitoring encroachment, utility installation and coordination, issuing approach permits~~,~~ and completing road reviews for subdivision processing. In addition to the installation and maintenance of guardrails, ~~T~~there are approximately 100 bridges and 700 culverts, cattle passes and cattle guards maintained by the department.[1]

Existing Road Conditions

~~Recent p~~Population growth over the past decade has resulted in an increase in the number of vehicles on the road system and the overall demand for travel. The existing primary transportation system for roads and highways is shown on Map 6.1. Sustained growth and vehicle trips attributed to that growth have stressed the road network. Although population growth has slowed over the past three years when compared to the ~~continues to average two percent~~ 2% growth rate per year (average) when the Growth Policy was originally written, the average annual daily traffic (AADT) on county roads ~~is~~ has continued to ~~increasing~~ increase at a ~~much more~~ dramatic pace. Since 1990 the population of Flathead County ~~population growth~~ has increased approximately ~~34~~54%, while traffic increases on selected county roads from about 4% to 64% ~~5% to 60%~~ *per year*. There is a direct correlation between land use patterns and traffic. Most of the local traffic increase is related to the rapidly expanding residential housing market~~.~~, as ~~E~~each new home ~~is~~ can be expected to generate an average of 10 trips per day (based on traffic engineering standards). Table 6.1 provides information on selected county roads and their AADT.

Comment [a3]: Update map 6.1

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[1] Flathead County Road and Bridge Department

Table 6.1
Flathead County Road AADT

Location	Point	Early AADT (yr)	Recent AADT (yr)	% Increase/Yr.
Bierney Creek Rd.	W. of US 93	~~821~~ 933 (1998)	~~1142~~ 1,335 (2009) ~~(2005)~~	~~4.9~~ 3.9%
Boon Rd.	~~At~~ W. of US 93	~~343~~ 390 (1998)	~~534 (2005)~~ 563 (2008)	~~7.0~~ 4.4%
Cemetery Rd.	~~At~~ E. of Airport Rd.	~~580~~ 753 (1999)	~~1009 (2005)~~ 1746 (2008)	~~10.6~~ 15%
Jellison Rd.	N. of Pioneer Rd.	~~180~~ 205 (1998)	~~986~~ 1,121 (2005)	~~55.9~~ 63.8%
JP Rd.	E. of US 93	~~401~~ 456 (1997)	~~1325~~ 1,506 (2005)	~~25.6~~ 28.8%
Kila Rd.	At US 2	~~1043~~ 1,098 (1997)	~~1588~~ 1,960 (2005)	~~5.8~~ 9.8%
LaBrandt Rd.	E. of MT 35	~~286~~ 307 (1997)	~~438 (2004)~~ 681 (2009)	~~6.7~~ 10.2%
McCaffery Rd	At Echo Lake Rd.	~~329~~ 354 (1997)	~~479 (2004)~~ 518 (2007)	~~5.7~~ 4.6%
Pioneer Rd.	E. of US 2	~~350~~ 398 (1998)	~~1163~~ 1,322 (2005)	33.2%~~29.0~~
Rocky Cliff Rd.	W. of US 93	~~560~~ 629 (1997)	~~962~~ 1,216 (2005)	~~8.0~~ 11.7%
Stillwater Rd.	N. of Farm-to-Market	~~427~~ 480 (1997)	~~788~~ 2,035 ~~(2003)~~ (2008)	~~12.1~~ 29.4%
Valley View Dr.	S. of Foys Lake Rd.	~~353~~ 397 (1997)	~~1290~~ 1562 (2005)	~~29.5~~ 36.7%
W. Springcreek Rd.	N. of US 2	~~901~~ 948 (1997)	~~1172~~ 2,011 ~~(2002)~~ (2008)	~~5.0~~ 10.2%
West Valley Dr.	N. of Farm-to-Market	~~517~~ 581 (1997)	~~711~~ 1,206 (2003) (2008)	~~5.4~~ 9.8%

Source: Flathead County Road and Bridge Department Traffic Counts, 1997-2009

Traffic on Montana State and US Highways is increasing at rates similar to county roads. The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) is responsible for management and maintenance of the federal and state highway systems. The state highway system includes major highways and secondary highways such as Whitefish Stage Road. The primary purpose of the highway system is to transport people and commodities over long distances. In Flathead County the highway system functions as a major arterial network to move people from collector roads to local destinations. MDT monitors daily traffic on the highways statewide by means of ~~85~~ 86 ~~continuous~~ permanent automatic traffic recorders (ATR sites), as well as numerous short term count recorders. According to MDT traffic count data, the AADT on highways has increased an average of 4% per year

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since 1990. Selected traffic counts for State and Federal highways are shown in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2
Selected Highway Average Annual Daily Traffic

Highway	Location	1990	2000	~~2004~~ 2010	% Change 1990-~~2004~~2010
US Hwy 2	W. of Kalispell	5540	7500	~~8750~~ 7,920	43% ~~58~~
US Hwy 2	S. of MT Hwy 40	6540	11650	~~13870~~ 14,870	127% ~~112~~
US Hwy 93	S. of Lakeside	2540	3670	~~4190~~ 3,940	~~65~~ 55%
US Hwy 93	S. of MT Hwy 82	5120	7050	~~8310~~ 7,640	~~62~~ 49%
US Hwy 93	S. of MT Hwy 40	7050	10500	~~13890~~ 14,060	~~97~~ 99%
US Hwy 93	N. of Whitefish	2020	3710	~~2400~~ 3,970	~~19~~ 97%
US Hwy 93	N. of US Hwy 2	15880	16860	~~19640~~ 22,410	~~2~~ 41 %
MT Hwy 35	S. of Bigfork	3100	4610	3,980 ~~4640~~	~~50~~ 28%
MT Hwy 35	N. of MT Hwy. 82	2600	6090	6,020 ~~7470~~	~~187~~ 132%
MT Hwy 35	S. of MT Hwy 206	2660	5610	6,910 ~~6880~~	~~159~~ 160%
MT Hwy 35	E. of US 2	12440	15600	14,240 ~~17470~~	~~40~~ 14%
MT Hwy 40	W. of US 2	5280	7590	~~8550~~ 8,030	~~62~~ 52%
MT Hwy 82	W. of MT Hwy 35	3880	4500	~~4190~~ 5,950	~~24~~ 53%
MT Hwy 206	N. of MT Hwy 35	2730	3440	~~4070~~ 4,170	~~49~~ 53%
MT Hwy 206	S. of US 2	2850	4290	~~4440~~ 4,080	~~56~~ 43%

Source: Flathead County Long Range Planning Task Force Road transportation Report, 2006; current data from Montana Department of Transportation Statewide Traffic Count Site Map, http://www.mdt.mt.gov/publications/datastats/statewide_traffic.shtml [collected 9/19/2011].

General observations can be made from the information contained in Tables 6.1 and 6.2. On county roads daily traffic is increasing, on average, ~~by~~ more than 15% per year. County roads are, by function, intended to collect traffic from local subdivision roads and connect to the highway system. As more local roads are built inside developments, collector and arterial roads will become busier. Motorists will seek alternative routes as existing roads become more congested, impacting other roads that are not paved or already over utilized. Providing transportation choices for travel from residences to other destinations is an important consideration in developing a road system network.

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The highway system AADT clearly shows that the highest concentration of traffic radiates outward from, or towards, the city of Kalispell. MT Highway 35, between Bigfork and Kalispell, has shown significant increase in travel as has US ~~Hwy.~~Highway 93 between Whitefish and Kalispell. ~~Additionally, US Hwy. 93, from the intersection of MT Hwy. 82 to Kalispell, maintains this trend. While the highways leading into Kalispell show dramatic increases in traffic, the US Hwy. 93 and US Hwy. 2 intersection has remained relatively constant over the years.~~

In addition to population increases, the location of new development influences trip generation and mobility. The travel time to work is a good indication of the functionality of the transportation system and developing land use patterns. Development close to a functional road system creates less impact (measured in travel time) than scattered development. Longer distances from residential development to destinations such as workplace, school, and shopping, ~~and increased traffic,~~ equate to traffic as well as increased travel time. Travel time, based on US Census Transportation Planning Package from 1990 to 2000 is presented in Table 6.3.

Table 6.3
Flathead County Travel Time to Work

	1990 # of residents with commute time indicated~~)~~	**2000 # of residents with commute time indicated**	**% Change**
Travel Time			
Less than 5 minutes	1550	2041	31.7
5-9 minutes	4707	5578	18.5
10-14 minutes	5462	6518	19.3
15-19 minutes	4239	5579	31.6
20-29 minutes	4175	6348	52.0
30-44 minutes	2463	4225	21.5
Over 45 minutes	1027	2035	98.1
TOTAL	**23623**	**32324**	

Source: U.S. Census Transportation Planning Package, 2000

Table 6.3 shows that commuting times have increased substantially since 1990. Travel times to work exceeding 45 minutes have almost doubled, while travel time of 20-29 minutes has increased by 52 percent. The smallest increases were found in commutes of 5-14 minutes. As more vehicles are introduced to the road system this trend will continue.

The condition and maintenance of the county road system is a primary concern of most residents. County roads are very rural in character. Of the ~~existing~~ approximately ~~1,200~~ 1,130 miles of county maintained roads, ~~approximately 1/3 (400~~ 430 miles~~)~~ are paved and the remaining ~~2/3 (800~~700~~)~~ miles are graveled or unimproved.[2] Since the mid-

[2] Flathead County 2-Year Road Network Maintenance Plan, February 2010

Comment [a4]: This data is not shown in the table above

Comment [a5]: The data above does not infer whether traffic is traveling to or from Kalispell, just the number of cars on the road. Not a statement based on data available.

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1980's, the county has generally not accepted maintenance responsibility for new roads or easements. Approximately 20%, or 80 miles, of paved roads are near the end of their life cycle or are reaching carrying capacity and need to be reconstructed to meet the needs of the growing motoring public.

The Road Department's ability and resources to construct new roads have not kept pace with the growth in traffic due to new development, population growth and lack of funds. Each year the department constructs approximately 3 miles of new roads. The department maintains the existing road system by asphalt overlay, chip sealing, minor repairs by filling potholes and easement improvements (i.e.: guard rails, road signs, line-of-site maintenance, etc.). On average, the Road Department overlays between 30 to 40 miles of paved roads and chip seals about 35 to 50 miles annually.

The existing roadway system, consisting of asphalt paved and graveled surfaces, provides difficult decision making regarding allocation of resources. Asphalt paving is more intensive with up-front capital costs while gravel is less capital intensive. Conversely, once it is constructed, asphalt pavement is less costly than maintenance of new or reconstructed roads. Graveled roads become extremely cost prohibitive and resource intensive. Over a 10 year period pavement and graveled roads tend to equalize in overall costs. However, paved roads accommodate more vehicles while maintaining mobility.

This growth policy has goals and policies that call for the development of a county wide transportation plan that will address current and future needs, a uniform system of prioritization for road improvements and maintenance, a potential dust abatement program and other related issues. Any discussion of the road system should include the financial structure that supports it. The county must have a road improvement strategy for the future. That strategy should be coordinated with land use planning. The preferred locations for residential and commercial development influence new road and pathway construction and maintenance work done by the road department. Transportation Demand Management (TMD) techniques should be considered as a strategy to mitigate traffic effects as the transportation plan is implemented.

Roadway Classifications

Defining road types by function is the first step in designing a transportation system. County roads have two basic functions: moving traffic and providing physical access to abutting land uses. Roadway designs and standards are developed for each classification considering use, volume, vehicle speed and public safety. The use of these standards is also intended to keep the operating cost of maintaining the road system at a reasonable level while providing infrastructure to meet public needs.

- **Local Roads** – Roadways that are used for direct access to residential, commercial, industrial, or other abutting properties in areas of lower traffic volumes at low speeds. Typically, these roads are located within a subdivision or commercial/business development.

Comment [a7]: Confirmed based on PASER ratings found in 2-year report, 2010

Comment [a8]: Confirm with Dave Prunty that this is still accurate

Comment [a9]: Confirm numbers

- **Collector Roads** – Roadways which serve to distribute traffic between local roads and arterial roads and provide limited primary access to abutting properties. Higher traffic volumes and speed are normal. These roads may connect residential areas to commercial and other areas. Collector roads typically are dedicated to the public and maintained by the county, but can be privately maintained in specific instances.

- **Arterial Roads** – A roadway system serving as the principal network for through traffic flow. These roads connect areas of traffic generation. Arterials should always be public county roads maintained by the county or the MDT.

- **Highways** – A primary roadway system which allows movement of goods and commodities over long distances. In Flathead County the highways act as major arterials to move people from collector and arterials to other local destinations such as the work place and retail centers. Highways are maintained by the MDT.

Traffic Sheds

A traffic shed, like a water shed, considers all vehicle travel that feeds into a road system rather than considering development abutting the road. To gain a better understanding of traffic patterns, the Flathead Valley is organized into 16 traffic sheds. Map 6.2 identifies traffic sheds in Flathead Valley. Traffic sheds are based on the existing road system ~~and~~ as well as geography. Since traffic patterns indicate most travel from residences goes to Kalispell, the distance to US Hwy 2 and US Hwy 93 from each traffic shed was measured and split between collector mileage and corridor mileage. A summary of the traffic sheds is provided in Table 6.4 and additional information can be located in Appendix A: Baseline Analysis.

Table 6.4
Traffic Sheds in the Flathead Valley

Traffic Shed	Collector Road(s)	Corridor Highway	AADT	Area (sq.mi.)
Northeast Section				
Teakettle	Lake 5 Rd/SH 486	US 2	1186	121
Half Moon	Half Moon Rd	US 2	1885	60
Whitefish Stage Rd	Whitefish Stage N. of Meridian	None.	2640	39
Helena Flats	Rose Crossing	US 2	1247	18
Columbia Mtn.	SH 206, Columbia Stage	SH 35	5070	64
Southeast Section				
Echo Lake	Lake Blaine Rd, Echo Lake Rd	SH 35	4351	73
Bigfork East	Swan River Rd	SH 35	874	22
Bigfork West	Holt Drive	SH 35	1244	10
Foys Canyon	Foys Lake Rd, Airport Rd	None	Unknown	42
Lakeside	Measured at US 93	US 93	8310	66

Comment [a10]: Update map 6.2

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Lower Valley	Fairmont Rd, Lower Valley Rd	SH 35, US 93	2618	66
Southwest Section				
Ashley Lake	Batavia Lane	US 2	986	93
Marion	Pleasant Valley Rd	US 2	1288	59
Truman Creek	Truman Creek Rd	--	648	75
Northwest Section				
KM Ranch	Church Drive, KM Ranch Rd	US 93	723	58
Lost Creek	Rhodes Draw	US 93	109	71

Source: Flathead County Long Range Planning Task Force Road Transportation Plan, 2006

***Since the Long Range Planning Task Force has been disbanded and no update report , two options available:**

- **maintain existing traffic sheds, update AADT for collectors**
- **eliminate entire section**

Transportation Projections

Land use and transportation policies work together. Over the next 20 years, the population is expected to increase by an additional 35,052 ~~29,800~~ people. To maintain a livable and workable community, practical transportation solutions will be essential.

Traffic Projections

Traffic in Flathead County will continue to grow in direct relationship with population growth. Assuming a household average of 2.5 persons per residence, population projections can be used as an indicator of future vehicle trips. Assuming no change in motorist behavior, each new detached single family residence adds about 10 vehicle trips per day to the road system. Projected vehicle trips, based on population estimates, are identified in Table 6.5.

Table 6.5
Projected Annual Vehicle Trips in Flathead County

	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030
Population	~~89,675~~ 90,928	~~97,127~~100,520	~~104,713~~ 108,890	~~111,740~~ 117,290	125,980
Vehicle Trips (In millions)	~~130.9~~ 132.8	~~141.8~~ 146.8	~~152.9~~ 159.0	~~163.1~~ 171.2	184.0

Standardizing roadway design for functional road classifications to accommodate future demand will aid in maintaining mobility. Road designs incorporate shoulders for emergency parking, turn lanes and vehicle speeds. Level of service ratings will be extremely useful in developing a road system today to serve future motorists. Evaluation of the existing road system has been initiated by the Road Department. The Pavement Surface Evaluation Rating System (PASER) is used to evaluate paved roadway

conditions. This information will be valuable in setting priorities for near term and long term improvements.

Flathead County can expect approximately ~~163,100,000~~184,000,000 vehicle trips per year in ~~2025~~2030, an increase of ~~36~~39% over existing travel. These trips will be a function of emerging land use patterns. Vehicle trips should not be confused with vehicle miles traveled (VMT). To protect public health the road system should be improved as county population grows

The existing roadway system, with ~~approximately 400~~ 430 miles of paved roads and ~~800~~ nearly 700 miles of graveled roads, coupled with the MDT highway system, provides the backbone for future easement or corridor expansion. ~~The f~~Future growth in travel ~~can~~ may be partially accommodated through improvements to the existing system as well as ~~. New~~ new road corridors ~~are needed~~ to move traffic west to east across the Flathead Valley. Map 6.3 shows proposed roadway system improvements and corridors needed to maintain and/or increase mobility in Flathead County. This future road network is not static but should be viewed as an interim road system corridor plan. ~~Transportation~~ Deatiled transportation ~~modeling~~ and travel demand modeling is needed to prepare a more comprehensive regional transportation plan. A ~~comprehensive~~ collaborative modeling effort should show spatial relationships to existing and proposed land use patterns.

Comment [a11]: Updat map 6.3

PART 2: Public Transportation (See Goals 24 and 25)

Existing Characteristics

~~Public~~ Given the size and population of Flathead County, public transportation ~~in Flathead County is~~options tend to be limited. The population base and scattered low density land use patterns constrain the viability of an expansive public transit system. Low ridership with long distances between pick-up/drop-off stops make comprehensive general public transit cost prohibitive. Specialized public transit is available to service the general population as well as those with special needs ~~population~~.

Eagle Transit provides general public transportation service in the county. The ~~public transit~~organization operates several transportation services, and for some residents is the only means of mobility. Eagle Transit is controlled by the Flathead County Area IX Agency on Aging which began in 1987, focusing on the elderly. Since then Eagle Transit has expanded to serve the disabled population and general public within Flathead County. Eagle Transit currently provides a variety of services including ~~Kalispell~~ city bus routes~~;~~, Countywide "Dial-a-Ride" and "door to door" services, some of which are integrated with ~~scheduled~~ fixed city routes in Columbia Falls and Whitefish~~;~~, commuter service to Kalispell from Columbia Falls and Whitefish; and demand-response intercity services. ~~Service was recently expanded in Columbia Falls and the Canyon area.~~

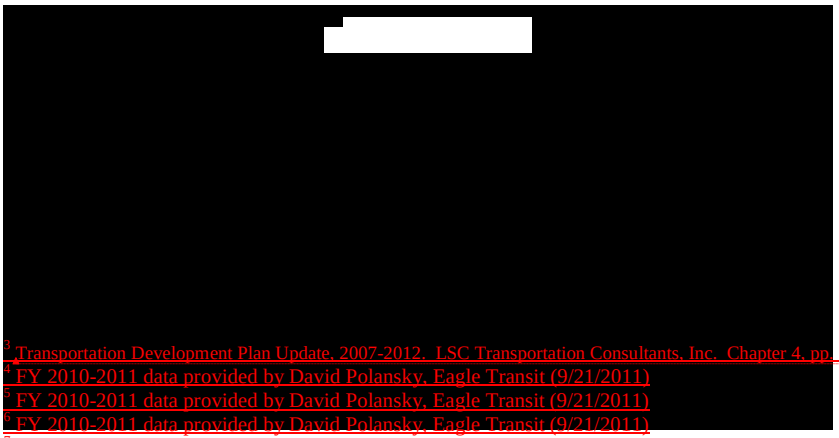
The Kalispell City bus route operates year round during the work week. The route stops at key destinations including the community college, hospital, shopping mall, County

Courthouse complex, senior housing and a variety of shopping markets. During Fiscal year 2004-05 the service made approximately 12,000 trips and accounted for 25% of the total system wide ridership.[3] During Fiscal Year 2010-11, ridership levels had increased to 25,764, accounting for 32% of the total system ridership.[4] Commuter services have also been implemented between Kalispell and the cities of Columbia Falls and Whitefish. Current commuter ridership levels between Kalispell and Columbia Falls are at 3,965 for FY 2010-11; ridership levels between Kalispell and Whitefish are much higher for the year, coming in at 6,063.[5]

The "Dial-a-Ride" service implemented by Eagle Transit has been designed to meet the needs of the elderly and disabled and has measured great success in the past few years. In Kalispell the service logged ridership levels of 30,862 in FY 2010-2011, with ridership in Columbia Falls at 6,063 (combined with the fixed city route) and Whitefish at 4,769 (also combined).[6] ~~The~~ ~~"door to door" service varies by community and is designed to meet the needs of the elderly and disabled. The service is available within a 20 mile radius of Columbia Falls, Kalispell and Whitefish two days per week.~~ As part of ~~the~~ this "door to door" service, Eagle Transit provides elementary school curbside pick up and transport to the Summit's after school program called "SPARKS." The service provided approximately 5,000 rides in Fiscal Year 2004-05. ~~The "door to door" service reflected 75% of the total ridership in Fiscal Year 2004-05.~~ The "SPARKS" service is now integrated as part of the Kalispell fixed city route, and annual ridership numbers have been incorporated into ridership totals discussed in the paragraph above.

An additional "door-to-door" service provided by Eagle Transit is called the New Freedom Act and provides Dial-a-Ride services for those with disabilities, to help integrate them into their community. This service is provided outside of normal business hours and operates beyond the regular, established transit routes. In FY 2010-11, the New Freedom Act logged ridership levels of 1,348.[7]

Figure 6.1
Eagle Transit Annual Ridership



[3] Transportation Development Plan Update, 2007-2012. LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc. Chapter 4, pp. 1-2
[4] FY 2010-2011 data provided by David Polansky, Eagle Transit (9/21/2011)
[5] FY 2010-2011 data provided by David Polansky, Eagle Transit (9/21/2011)
[6] FY 2010-2011 data provided by David Polansky, Eagle Transit (9/21/2011)
[7] FY 2010-2011 data provided by David Polansky, Eagle Transit (9/21/2011)

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Source: Eagle Transit - Transportation Development Plan Update 2007 – 2012

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Annual ridership by market segment is relatively well understood. The elderly and disabled population currently comprises ~~approximately 60%~~ 57% of the total ridership. Contracted transit and the general public comprise the remaining ~~40~~43%. Elderly ridership has ~~been~~ continued to slowly decline ~~declining in recent years~~since 2005, while general public ridership has slightly increased. Ridership in the disabled market segment has been fairly stable in recent years. This modest change is a result of Eagle Transit promoting its services and expanding transit routes and programs to serve the general population, in addition to those with special needs.

Public Transportation Projections

Eagle Transit ridership has been declining from approximately 53,000 riders in 2001 to 47,000 riders in 2005. However, the Eagle Transit 5-year Transportation Plan ~~identifies~~ developed in 2005 indicated there would be a shift in population that ~~will~~ would increase ridership levels by year 2010. This proved correct when total ridership levels increased to 81,462 in Fiscal Year 2010-11. The transit company ~~is currently exploring new programs to boost ridership~~has continued to develop and expand programs including their "Dial-a-Ride" service ~~to promote~~promoting advanced reservations, designated route deviation to pick up call in ride requests, demand response service~~s~~, and extended weekday and weekend hours. The 2007-2012 Transportation Plan Update is currently undergoing revision and will become available in July 2012, with public service transportation projections through 2017. The plan will incorporate the most current data related to public transportation programs and ridership throughout the County, and should be referenced in conjunction with this Growth Policy document for the most accurate and up-to-date information available.

There ~~is an opportunity~~continues to be opportunities for Eagle Transit to expand partnerships with Flathead County, the State of Montana and the National Park Service with the goal that Glacier National Park's internal transit system would serve as a catalyst for development of such services outside the park. At the end of FY 2010-11, ridership within Glacier National Park exceeded 170,000 for the year, and is anticipated to continue to grow. ~~A proposed~~The current transit system in Glacier National Park could be expanded to extend to Kalispell during the non-tourist season. Eagle Transit could use the Glacier National Park vehicles for public transportation in Flathead County during the off season. A partnership should be fully investigated.

PART 3: Bicycle and Pedestrian Paths (See Goal 25)

Pedestrian and Bicycle Paths in Flathead County

Bicycle and pedestrian paths offer a range of benefits. Bicycle lanes, when added to road rebuilding plans, are a viable alternative to potentially costly separated paths. The Bicycle Transportation Committee initially called for in this document was formally created in 2008 by the Flathead County Weed, Parks and Recreation Board (Parks Board), in compliance with the Growth Policy. The PATHS Advisory Committee ("People, Athletics, Travel, Health and Safety") was established to provide guidance and recommendations on developing a countywide trails program, to provide residents safe and convenient access to a non-motorized trail network connecting communities throughout Flathead County. The PATHS Committee incorporated this vision in an overall plan – The Flathead County Trails Plan, adopted by Resolution No. 2015O on October 12th, 2010 – that will be incorporated as an element of the Flathead County Growth Policy as part of the 2012 update. ~~could define paths and lanes, as well as provide suggestions for places where each would be more desirable.~~

Families, groups and individuals use the paths in Flathead County to actively recreate. There is a significant health and fitness benefit as most recreation activities on pedestrian/bike paths involve exercise. It is common to see families biking or walking on the Great Northern trail or a group of cyclists cruising down the Somers trail. Serving as transportation corridors, these paths encourage pedestrian and bicycle commuting thus reducing traffic congestion and fuel consumption.

Safety is another community benefit because pedestrian/bicycle paths are separated from automobiles. Most roads in the county were constructed specifically for motor vehicle use. Pedestrian/bike paths are separated from roads and are an attractive alternative to vehicles. Unincorporated Flathead County has about ~~28~~ 33 miles of pedestrian/bike paths, which are primarily used for recreation activities and secondarily for commuting to work. ~~The~~ Existing pathways, as well as proposed routes and new trail networks are discussed in greater detail in the Flathead County Trails Plan and represented accordingly by the County-wide trails map found in Appendix M of the planning document. ~~**Table 6.6**~~

~~**Existing Pedestrian/Bike Paths in Unincorporated areas of Flathead County**~~

~~**NAME**~~	~~**LOCATION**~~	~~**DISTANCE (miles)**~~
~~Somers Rails to Trails~~	~~US Hwy 93~~	~~5.0~~
~~Edgerton Bike Path~~	~~Whitefish Stage Rd.~~	~~2.0~~
~~Swan River Bike Path~~	~~Bigfork~~	~~1.5~~
~~Great Northern Rails to Trails~~	~~Kalispell~~	~~6.0~~
~~Helena Flats Bike Path~~	~~Helena Flats~~	~~2.9~~
~~Farm to Market Bike Path~~	~~West Valley~~	~~1.8~~
~~Swan Valley School Path~~	~~Bigfork~~	~~1.3~~
~~Somers Beach Path~~	~~US Hwy 93~~	~~1.2~~
~~Hungry Horse Bike Path~~	~~US Hwy 93~~	~~4.0~~
~~Lone Pine Path~~	~~Kalispell~~	~~1.6~~
~~Grand Avenue Walk~~	~~Bigfork~~	~~0.3~~
~~Fairmont Egan Pedestrian path~~	~~Bigfork~~	~~0.5~~

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Comment [a13]: Discussed with AH, no existing inventory/list of trails (similar to below), as this list changes almost annually. Existing and proposed trails represented on map in Appendix M, could be referenced visually on GP Map 6.4.

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	~~Total~~	~~28.1 miles~~

Pedestrian and Bicycle Path Projections

Given the levels of growth Flathead County has experienced in the past decade, a more comprehensive pedestrian/bicycle path program may be warranted in the county. Existing and proposed commuter and recreational path corridors are shown on Map 6.4, as well as in Appendix M of Trails Plan. Flathead County constructs an average of two miles of pedestrian/bike paths per year. Proposed project sponsors typically compete for available federal Community Transportation Enhancement Program (CTEP) funds, which are administered by the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) and passed through to local agencies. While CTEP funds often seem to be the most readily used funding source for new trail construction, many other funding options and programs are available to aid in the development and implementation of long range non-motorized transportation planning projects. A variety of funding resources available, as well as their administrative requirements are discussed at length in Appendix G of the Flathead County Trails Plan. At the County level, the administration and implementation of future trail planning and development, as well as the funding and coordination of such projects, is discussed in Chapters 3 and 4 of the Trails Plan document. ~~Approved county projects awaiting CTEP funding include a 1.5 mile pedestrian path expansion in Evergreen, a two mile bike expansion in Kila and a two mile path along Willow Glen, to be known as the Sam Bibler Commemorative Trail.~~ ~~A more comprehensive pedestrian/bicycle path program is warranted in the county. Existing and proposed commuter and recreational path corridors are shown on Map 6.4~~. ~~This map should be considered very dynamic.~~

~~This growth policy recommends the creation of a county Bicycle Transportation Advisory Committee to plan a coordinated bicycle trail and path network, prioritize easement acquisition, set construction standards and determine funding mechanisms. This should enable the county to help such a network become a reality.~~

PART 4: Glacier Park International Airport (See Goal 25)

The demand for air service has increased dramatically over the last ten years. In 1990, Glacier Park International Airport reported approximately 100,000 boardings. Total boardings increased to 178,000 by 2004, a 78 percent increase. The airport currently has the following amenities[8]:

- Runway Aprons -2
- Tie Downs – 20
- FBO Hangars – 63
- Conventional Hangars – 10
- Passenger Gates – 4
- Public Parking – 518
- Rental Car Spaces – 119

[8] GPI Airport 2005 Master Plan Update

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Comment [a14]: Update map 6.4

Comment [a15]: Talked to AH; did not feel it was relevant to name particular CTEP projects, as these tend to change quickly over time and would be outdated shortly after GP adoption.

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The increase in the number of boardings is directly related to the number of aircraft transporting passengers. With the increase in air travel demand there is a need to continually monitor facility performance and assess needs to ensure that airport operations have the capacity to accommodate the increased number of aircraft. Such monitoring is also used to optimize internal terminal and parking activities. The airport is an extremely important asset in linking Flathead County to the regional and global markets as well as transporting visitors to the area. Given the location of Flathead County relative to other non-county destinations, the airport plays a vital role in meeting air transportation needs of the area.

Several other general aviation airports exist in Flathead County. These airports are intended primarily for general and recreational use and have no scheduled carriers. General aviation airports are located in Kalispell, Whitefish and Ferndale. The Kalispell City Airport provides charter services and is managed by the city. Whitefish Municipal Airport and Ferndale Airport are managed by Glacier International Airport.

Airport Use Projections

Glacier Park International Airport is expected to grow from 178,334 passenger enplanements in 2004 to 596,658 passenger enplanements by year 2030. Passenger enplanement is the number of people getting on commercial air carrier aircraft. Passenger projections are provided in Table 6.7. The long range projections of aviation in Flathead County also include a 38% increase in the "based aircraft fleet mix." Jet aircraft should see the largest percentage increase, though single-engine aircraft will still dominate in total numbers.

Table 6.7
Projected Glacier Park International Airport Passenger Enplanements

2004 (actual)	2010 (projected)	2020 (projected)	2030 (projected)
178,334	293,330	492,163	596,658

Source: GPI 2005 Master Plan update

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Comment [a16]: Trying to find contact at Airport Authority, to get updated info.

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